

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 5229

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PA

SUBJECT: CHRISTMAS MESSAGES: THE PRESIDENT AND THE ARCHBISHOP

2. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT STROESSNER'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE WAS A STRONG DEFENSE OF GOP'S POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS. SPEECH ASSERTS THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL CONTINUE TO STRESS LAW AND ORDER ABOVE ALL ELSE AND THAT THERE IS NO HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM IN PARAGUAY. IN SHARPLY CONTRASTING CHRISTMAS MESSAGE, ARCHBISHOP OF ASUNCION DREW ATTENTION TO LACK OF JUSTICE IN PARAGUAY AND ATTACKED JUDICIAL SYSTEM AS CORRUPT AND FILLED WITH MORALLY-WEAK JUDGES. PRESIDENT'S SPEECH WAS REMARKABLE BECAUSE HE FELT HE HAD TO DEFEND HIS REGIME IN HUMAN RIGHTS TERMS. ARCHBISHOP'S MESSAGE DEMONSTRATED THAT CHURCH CONTINUES TO BE ONLY INTERNAL FORCE WILLING TO CHALLENGE STROESSNER REGIME'S PERFORMANCE. END SUMMARY.

2. DECEMBER 24 AFTERNOON, PRESIDENT STROESSNER DELIVERED HIS CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO HIS COUNTRY. SPEECH WAS REMARKABLE FOR ITS EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS. IN ADDITION TO THE STANDARD CHRISTMAS RHETORIC, PRESIDENT SAID, "WHEN WE ESTABLISH PEACE, WE ESTABLISH RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES PARAGUAY HAS PROTECTED THESE SACRED RIGHTS OF THE HUMAN PERSON. THESE HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH UNDER OTHER CONDITIONS WOULD BE SUBJECT TO VIOLENT ATTACKS BY ANTISOCIAL FORCES, WE HAVE DEFENDED, WE ARE DEFENDING AND WE WILL DEFEND VIGOROUSLY SO THAT NEVER AGAIN WILL THE

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PEOPLE OF PARAGUAY SEE ITS LIBERTY SUBMERGED IN ANARCHY AND VIOLENCE."

3. IN SHARP CONTRAST, ARCHBISHOP OF ASUNCION ROLON IN HIS CHRISTMAS MESSAGE AT MIDNIGHT MASS, PUBLISHED THE SAME DAY AS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, CRITICIZED SOCIAL EVILS AND THE LACK OF JUSTICE IN PARAGUAY SOCIETY. UNLIKE THE PRESIDENT, WHO FOUND

EVERYTHING IN GOOD ORDER, THE CHURCH'S SPOKESMAN, IN A CALL TO CHRISTIAN ACTION, DREW ATTENTION TO "WELL-KNOWN SITUATIONS OF INJUSTICE WHICH OFFEND US." HE WAS ESPECIALLY CRITICAL OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM WHICH HE EMPHASIZED WAS A SOURCE OF INJUSTICE, THAT THERE IS NO RULE OF LAW AND THAT THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM IS FILLED WITH STRUCTURAL CORRUPTION AND POPULATED BY MORALLY-WEAK JUDGES. HE SAID, "WE MUST REESTABLISH THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PARAGUAYAN PEOPLE IN THIS COURT SYSTEM."

4. COMMENT: PRESIDENT'S SPEECH IS LATEST AND VERY CLEAR EXPRESSION OF STANDARD GOP LINE ON QUESTIONS OF LAW AND ORDER AND HUMAN RIGHTS. UNCHARACTERISTICALLY, THE PRESIDENT FELT HE HAD TO DEFEND THE RECORD OF HIS ADMINISTRATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS TERMS, RATHER THAN THE USUAL RECITATION OF HIS REGIME'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS. AS USUAL, THERE WAS NO ADMISSION THAT THERE ARE HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES WHICH NEED ATTENTION. ARCHBISHOP ROLON'S STRONG CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATES AGAIN THAT THE CHURCH IS THE ONLY INTERNAL FORCE WILLING TO CHALLENGE THE STROESSNER REGIME'S PERFORMANCE IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.  
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## Message Attributes

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